John F. Kennedy Magnet School, Port Chester-Rye

A report to the board of education by the principal of the John F. Kennedy School shows how a variety of data is continuously gathered and analyzed to inform program and practice.

John F. Kennedy's Board of Education Presentation
Thursday, February 10, 2010

Driven by Data

For many years, the teachers and administration of JFK Magnet School have used educational data to inform our instruction, allowing us to give our students a better chance to learn. Even though JFK has distinguished itself as a 2010 National Blue Ribbon School, we view our accomplishment as simply a Work in Progress. As a result, we firmly believe that our work ethic, our willingness to lead, our desire to be even better teachers, and – most important – our determination to see our students succeed should continue to be the hallmarks of this school and our educational community as we journey into the future. To ensure this goal, I have placed tremendous expectations on my staff as we continue through this exploratory year of using data to further improve our instruction and Response to Intervention (RTI) process. I want to recognize my colleagues and thank them for attempting to take the lead by following a very comprehensive plan for examining, processing, and utilizing data. In addition, we have excellent union leadership, who deserve to be recognized for facilitating these efforts. We are also fortunate to have the collective intelligence and Lit Life support available to better analyze and evaluate the successes of being Driven by Data. Thus, we offer our best recommendations for necessary adjustments at the end of this presentation.

We will emphasize the importance of

1. **Small group instruction**
2. **Data Warehousing and Data Mentor**
3. **Response to Intervention (RTI) legislation**
4. JFK’s **Academic Intervention Services (AIS) program**
5. **The changes, initiative, and recommendations that have resulted from our commitment to using data more effectively.**

In each area, there have been successes, challenges, and missteps, calling for clear thinking, collaboration, and patience. As our Work in Progress continues, we
have set the highest standards of professionalism and teamwork for ourselves. We believe that the thoughtful use of educational data will help us focus our teaching so that our children may learn better.

Small group instruction is considered the most crucial element in the teaching and learning of elementary children, especially in Language Arts and Mathematics. Our district has made a significant investment in a balanced literacy approach through Lit Life, where our teachers have received professional development in such areas as

- Classroom design
- The Focused Instructional Model, emphasizing the Whole-Small-Whole (WSW) Approach.
- Lesson plan writing.
- Common instructional practices and language that spiral from Kindergarten through grade 5.
- Small Group Instruction and recordkeeping, considered foundations for differentiating instruction to support struggling, on grade level, and accelerated students.

Small group instruction required us to learn and focus on classroom design and timing to support student independence. For some, this model has been a way of life. For most, we needed to re-learn and trust our instincts that, indeed, we could give up some control in return for 20-40 minutes of individualized daily guided reading and conferencing. Aside from our Readers and Writers Workshop model, we have scheduled one specified period per day for small group instruction called an RTI block (iBlock), where classroom teachers and interventionists converge on each grade level and work in small groups for Language Arts instruction, depending upon our students' academic needs (phonemic awareness or phonetic practice, decoding, fluency, comprehension or strategies groups).
We support our students in two languages, depending upon the class. In this model, our teachers and their professional training are matched to children who exhibit specific gaps and/or difficulties in acquiring academic skills. This period of small group instruction satisfies IEP mandates, as well as our need to provide Academic Intervention Services (AIS).

JFK has approximately 750 students and will soon have 800. On a daily basis, our Literacy Team serves struggling students in two languages in six grade levels across three buildings on two campuses. The explicit responsibility of our Lit Team members is to support our struggling students, classroom teachers, and RTI process.

The data collected by classroom teachers and Literacy Team members is crucial to the larger plan called for by RTI. The purpose of collecting and cataloging student data in our model is not only to inform our instruction but to re-group our students according to their achievement levels in either English or Spanish Language Arts. This should always be a fluid process, with communication and documentation. We will need to carefully construct student IEPs, which will be a matter of discussion as we approach our annual reviews for children with disabilities.

The triangulation of data in this era of RTI requires various data points for both grade level and data team meetings. When we gather at our data meetings, we bring information and evidence that give us reliable indicators of a student’s academic performance. Assessment tools are used by all teachers, and they have been trained to use the information gathered from these assessments to inform/change their daily small group lessons. One of the tools we use is DRA-2/IDEL [Spanish], which assesses a child’s fluency and comprehension skills, (such as sequential order and/or predictions). In addition, we use DIBELS/IDEL [Spanish] as a Universal Screening tool and for weekly Progress Monitoring. In K and 1, DIBELS assesses a child’s development in areas such as phonemic awareness and/or letter recognition. In grades 1 through 5, DIBELS gives an accurate reading of a child’s fluency/rate, which is a precursor to comprehension and independent reading. Comprehensive Writing Assessments (CWA),
NYSESLATs, and Literacy Profiles are part of the data gathering responsibilities of our staff at the K-1 level. For grades 3 through 5, Interim Assessments in both ELA and Mathematics, as well as New York State Assessments in the areas of ELA, Mathematics, and Science, can be added to DIBELS and DRA-2 assessing. We will continue to review and reflect on assessments, finding the best tools possible to maximize data and instructional time.

Data collection can only be meaningful if it is used to inform our programming and daily instruction. The implementation of our RTI (iBlock) is a direct consequence of the use of the data we have collected. This is the reason we gather data. Through our assessments, we look at the academic vital signs and prescribe a course of action to fill in the gaps students may have in their educational development. The data we collect is meaningful because it drives our grouping and our daily planning. Implementation of RTI is derived from these sources as well. Every day, our teachers are acquiring training, experience, knowledge, and comfort level in these areas, refining the craft of assessment and improving our RTI process. For all of our successes, however, there is still room for improvement.

There is general agreement that our iBlock is an improvement and is successful, yet we are confronted with the necessity of “assessment months” in September and January. The interruption of daily push in and pull out support during January impels us to consider future adjustments to this year’s procedures. Time continues to be a crucial factor in our current plan and certainly for the future as we grow. Lost instructional time and the “pulling” of our Literacy Team members to support our district’s RTI initiative must be carefully examined as we go forward into 2011-2012.

Small group, differentiated instruction at JFK has traditionally been the domain of our lower grade teachers. During the past two years, our teachers in grades 3-5 have been challenged to not only follow a W-S-W Focused Instructional Model, but to learn or re-learn the art of small group instruction, with its challenging aspects of scheduling, guided reading, strategy sessions, small group conferencing, one-on-one conferencing,
and the crucial nature of conferencing notes. There is no assessment that can provide a teacher with more valuable Language Arts and Math data than is gathered by consistent small group instruction, conferencing, and the art of differentiated instruction according to need, skill level, and a teacher's academic intervention training. The art and craft of recordkeeping for small group conferencing has been one goal of the past two years and continues to be a challenge for some of our teachers.

**SWBOCES** continues to make *Data Warehousing* and *Data Mentor* part of our lexicon. Our Regional Information Center (RIC) supports Port Chester's teachers, administrators, and central office with various types of educational data. While testing data is becoming more "teacher friendly," it can still cause tremors in educators who do not have the training or the ability to study and immerse themselves in student and grade level achievement data. Recent legislation and the next decade will change the way we use data, as teacher and Principal performance will soon become longitudinal, and the currently amorphous phrase "value added" will play a larger role in how we view our ability to succeed. There is no doubt that present and future school administrators will be more responsible than ever to testing data and the ways in which scores can be used to benefit how we teach and how our children learn.

We believe that great teaching will always defeat poverty and language barriers. We also believe that data, if viewed in the proper spirit, can be a powerful springboard for improved instruction.

We thank Maggie Rende for her contribution to Port Chester's ability to compile and communicate educational data to SWBOCES; they, in turn, use the *Warehouse* to communicate educational data to our State Education Department (SED). eScholar, from White Plains, are the architects who create the network for data transmission from all BOCES RICs to Albany and back again to our individual school districts. Mark Samis and Steve Liu are the data managers and visionaries from SWBOCES who have worked with JFK and PCMS through the years. JFK has presented at various conferences sponsored by eScholar and SWBOCES on how we use data at the "ground
level". Even though we are always a Work in Progress, the positive use of data is a way of life at JFK.

The Warehouse provides scores of digital folders that reflect current and historical testing data. The future will allow us to review an individual teacher's testing data over time. The Warehouse allows us access to Data Mentor, a marvelous tool for teachers and administrators to look at prior test questions, with an ocean of resources for classroom teachers, by New York State (NYS) Standard and Subskills. Through nySTART, administrators can access current and past NYS Report Cards, whose evolution and complexity has been staggering. We thank Frank Fanelli for providing us with periodic reports on both academic and demographic data, further allowing us to see the broad landscape of our successes, areas in which we need to improve, comparisons with other districts, and overall patterns and trends.

One of the changes our district has implemented this year is the creation of both Math and ELA Interim Assessments (IA) for grades 3-5. This is one way for our testing grades to look at data during the school year before viewing student disaggregated data provided during the summer, after the NYS testing cycle. We thank Carlos Sanchez for his vision and work toward this initiative. I also want to thank our third through fifth grade teachers for their willingness to support two new sets of interim assessments and their commitment to the time it takes to enter data on excel forms so we can easily synthesize student, teacher, and grade level success by Standard and discrete subskill. In this way we are improving our methods of evaluating student skills during the school year instead of after the testing cycle. This data also serves to help us group and evaluate students for our district's Prep for Success (PfS) program, designed to provide another layer of academic support to our students as we approach the NYS testing cycle, Spring data team meetings, and promotional decisions. We provide PfS support for all K-5 children who require academic interventions in varying degrees, based on funding. We expect to be able to utilize our Student Information System as a data repository for all types of pertinent student data by this time next year.

Port Chester-Rye, John F. Kennedy Magnet School
http://jfk.portchesterschools.org/home.aspx
Study Year: 2010-11
RTI legislation will become law in 2012. For practical purposes, this legislation is designed to reduce the number of referrals to our Committee on Special Education (CSE). The intent of RTI is to provide all children with the most complete academic program, especially those who have fallen behind. RTI is a classroom initiative to help prevent academic failure and identifications. RTI requires progress monitoring (we chose DIBELS/IDEL [Spanish]) and supports DRA-2 (EDL Spanish) and Literacy Profile assessments. This triangulation of data supports our Grade Level Team (GLT) and Data Team process of continually discussing our students so that no child falls through any cracks in terms of instruction and necessary academic interventions. In Port Chester’s case, these CSE reductions will address concerns about Disproportionality. In the last two years, JFK has reduced its referrals to CSE by 38%. An effective RTI instructional program will generate student data that will support our GLT and Data Team processes, which gives us a vehicle to properly assess for those who need small group, differentiated instruction.

Since 2008, the teachers at JFK have attempted to prepare for this legislation. Liam McGuirk has been our leader during this journey. Members of our Literacy Team were charged with the task of conceptualizing necessary academic and master scheduling changes. Professional training in various academic intervention programs is a key to this enterprise. Our goal is to match children exhibiting specific learning issues with teachers who have been trained to ameliorate those difficulties. We also have crucial discussions on tiered levels of intervention. This discussion never ends, as every case is different, and we are continually confronted with critical examinations of our own thinking. Our Literacy Team has received invaluable exposure to Jim Wright, a trainer of national reputation. Thanks to these sessions (during the 2009-2010 school year), we checked and verified our working knowledge of this legislation and planned for an RTI Intervention Block (iBlock), the structure of a Data Team process, and changes to our Instructional Support Team (IST). As mentioned before, when our plan is working meticulously, our Lit Team members daily cover an entire school of 33 classrooms on six grade levels in two languages across three buildings and two campuses. We do this in addition to Pull-out Support of our mandated and building level students (those non-
identified children who require early interventions). Our goal is to provide small group teaching interventions for identified students and for all children who require support. The iBlock allows our classroom teachers to provide small group instruction to those on or above grade level. None of this can happen without communication and teamwork, both keys to success at the elementary level. We have evolved into a cohesive teaching faculty based on fairness and trust, and, once we have completed this exploratory year, we must then plan properly for the future.

RTI mandates require personnel and training. The exposure of our classroom teachers to Jim Wright, or trainers with excellent RTI experience, makes it possible for everyone to have the same lexicon and the same level of understanding. It also provides the foundation for the crucial agreement on procedures. RTI is a classroom teacher initiative, and the first Tier of intervention is the responsibility of the classroom teacher. JFK has exhibited leadership and a willingness to remain "a step ahead" of this legislation, but in less than one year, we will all be legally bound not only to be informed, but to have a realistic, comprehensive plan.

JFK's Academic Intervention Services (AIS) program provides a comprehensive net of support for our students. Data drives many student related discussions, but one of the changes brought about by our commitment to RTI is the adjustment of our Instructional Support Team (IST) process. In prior years, we met weekly under the leadership of Dr. Bertha Cruz, Jaimi Kennedy, and Mayra Estrella. Classroom teachers had a regular opportunity to discuss students who were presenting academic, behavioral, or social-emotional issues that prevented them from achieving at grade level or acceptable rates. We now conduct IST meetings for only those children presenting behavioral or social-emotional issues. IST meetings are now designed for those children who are recommended for a third, most intensive level of academic support (Tier III) or for those who have been through multiple interventions at the Tier III level and will be recommended for a CSE referral. Tier III suggests intensive, daily, low ratio, small group instruction. Student data is required at these meetings, and both
classroom and intervention teachers are pressed to support their case for referral. Parent communication and meetings generally occur after IST meetings in this new era. All students who are recommended to our Committee on Special Education (CSE) must come through the IST process.

The AIS structure at JFK is as follows:

- Tier I supports scientifically based instruction and interventions at the classroom level. A strong RTI program relies on the expertise, flexibility, and willingness of the classroom teacher to attempt multiple, differentiated interventions for any child who is not achieving or making academic gains at normal, expected rates. We know that every child is different; yet, if early intervention services through small group, differentiated instruction have been provided with fidelity through our balanced literacy and AIS programs, then it is possible to diagnose learning difficulties early. GLT discussions are the first formal step in sharing information and concerns with colleagues and support staff. If assessment data supports what the classroom teacher already knows or suspects through daily group work, then the triangulation of data will help when Data Team meetings take place.

- The need for Tier II interventions are discussed at Data Team meetings and come as a result of both hard and soft student achievement data. Measurable goals are set or reflected upon at initial and follow up Data Team meetings. Thanks to members of our Literacy Team, we have been able to revise the data collection and documentation process so there is sufficient written information on each child considered to be “at risk” or at “some risk”. Reading, Special Education, and Speech and Language teachers provide Tier II interventions to our students, depending upon their learning needs. The decisions as to who receives Tier II instruction and which interventionist provides these interventions are made at Data Team meetings.

- As mentioned above, Tier III suggests intensive, daily, low ratio, targeted, small group instruction. Generally, children who are recommended for Tier III are at highest risk. The intent of this targeted, intense instruction is to limit the possibilities of an inappropriate CSE referral from taking place. Generally, our students in Tier III show some acceptable growth in academic achievement,
thanks to the intensive support they receive from a combination of expert teachers.

AIS services at JFK also imply a host of behavioral, socio-emotional supports, thanks to our school psychologists, nurse practitioners, and clinical social worker. The goal of our AIS program is to insure that, for every child who shows any kind of learning, behavioral, or emotional issue, there is a response and an intervention. Mentors and after-school programs are considered interventions at JFK. In addition, it is our job to monitor every student’s response to these interventions. The AIS and RTI processes give us the network through which all data and academic conversations can be shared. Data, both hard and soft, is inherent in every support we provide. Clearly, our goal is to leave no child behind, and our own experiences tell us that, with excellent teaching and a wide array of support net services and activities, our children grow into capable, well-adjusted, respectful students.

Our AIS program is also supported by technology and instructional learning software. Thanks to Joe Durney and his staff, we have more instructional technology than ever. Success Maker (SM) is a Tier II technology-based intervention that serves four grade levels, thanks to rolling laptop carts, the leadership of Darlene Noriega, and support from Jackie Meehan and Dr. Madalyn Romano. We examine SM data throughout the year. In most cases, the achievement levels of our students on SM match other data points that we consider when assessing and diagnosing our students. Technology is a vital partner in our quest to be Driven by Data.

I also want to mention the critical importance of our Kindergarten Screening Process and the leadership of Judy Diaz, Nancy Capparelli, and a host of colleagues through the years. Kindergarten Screening is where the long train of student data begins. JFK set the standard for our district’s screening process many years ago.

Our Bilingual Team serves over 400 English Language Learners. Our AIS and RTI processes are as crucial to these children as they are to native English speaking children. The variables in supporting bilingual students through the RTI process test the
collective teamwork of an entire teaching staff. Their work in training children in two languages so they can acquire the gift of multiple language literacy sets our staff and school apart.

The initiatives that have resulted from our commitment to using data more effectively are as follows:

- Improved, comprehensive Kindergarten Screening Process in both English and Spanish
- Whole-Small-Whole Focused Instructional Model
  - Small Group/Differentiated Instruction in both English and Spanish
- DRA-2 Assessments for grades K-5 in both English and Spanish
- RTI Intervention Block in both English and Spanish
- DIBELS (IDEL) Universal Screening three times per year in both English and Spanish
- DIBELS weekly Progress Monitoring in both English and Spanish
- Lit Life’s Comprehensive Writing Assessment (CWA) in both English and Spanish
- New Student Information System/on-line reporting system in both English and Spanish. The new Student Success Plan of eSchool Plus will allow us another option in terms of data storage.
- Interim Assessments for ELA (3X) and Mathematics (2X) [in both English and Spanish]
- Revisions to IST process

Priorities to consider for 2011-2012:

- Establish September, January, and June as “Assessment Months” at the elementary level.
Continue to work with and tailor our Lit Life training to support our language arts instruction and AIS program.

Amend the 2011-2012 school year assessment schedule to include the following:

**September:**
- DIBELS (Spanish IDEL) Universal Screening for K-5
- DRA-2 (Spanish EDL) in grades 1-5. Those below established benchmark in September will be DRA’d in January.
- Lit Team supports classroom teachers with assessments. Lit Team members train teachers/new teachers.
- FUNDATIONS training
- Running Record and Msecue Analysis training for all classroom teachers.
- Complete Data Team meetings in September so groupings and intervention schedules can commence by October 1st.

**October:**
- iBlock and AIS begin for all grade levels.
- Progress monitoring begins. New teachers will need training and a better understanding of all aspects of DIBELS progress monitoring.
- First Six Weeks (Lit Life) and ARCH (RC) begin wrapping up.
- Interim ELA Assessment is administered to grades 3-5 in late October. Teachers are asked to enter IA data into XL spreadsheets. This data will be synthesized and shared at GLT meetings. Data Mentor is used for preparation and training.
- CWA writing assessments administered to grades 1-5 driving small group work during Writers Workshop.

**November:**
- iBlock and AIS continue for all grade levels.
- Data Team meetings are conducted to revise grouping
- Classroom teachers continue to progress monitor.
- Interim Math assessment is administered 3-5. Teachers are asked to enter IA data into XL spreadsheets. This data will be synthesized and shared at GLT meetings. Data
Mentor is used for preparation and training.

- Interim ELA Assessment is administered grade 2 based on the new ELA testing program.

### December:

- Classroom teachers continue to **progress monitor**.
- **Interim Math Assessment** is administered grade 2.

### January:

- **DIBELS (IDEL)** Universal Screening (Lit Team).
- **DRA-2’s (EDL)** are administered (Lit Team support).
- **Interim ELA assessment** is administered to grades 3 through 5. Teachers are asked to enter IA data into XL spreadsheets. This data will be synthesized and shared at GLT meetings. Data Mentor is used for preparation and training.
- **Data Team meetings on each grade level.** Discussion, documentation, goal setting, regrouping.
- **Report Cards.**

### February:

- Lit Team begins AIS intervention schedule on 2/1.
- **Interim Math Assessments 3-5.** Teachers are asked to enter IA data into XL spreadsheets. This data will be synthesized and shared at GLT meetings. Data Mentor is used for preparation and training.
- Teachers continue to **progress monitor**.
- **Interim Assessment ELA grade 2.**

### March:

- **Data Team meetings on each grade level.** Discussion, documentation, goal setting, regrouping.
- **Kgn Screening.**
- **Interim Assessment Math grade 2.**
- **CWA Writing Assessment** for grades K-5.
- **Interim ELA assessment grades for grades 3-5.**
April:

- Classroom teachers continue to **progress monitor**
- Begin pulling ELC colleagues for PFS.
- **Interim Math Assessment for grades 3-5 in early April.**

May:

- State testing in ELA, Math, NYSESLAT, and Science

June:

- DIBELS (IDEL) Universal Screening (Lit Team).
- DRA-2’s (EDL) are administered (Lit Team support).
- Data Team meetings
- Retention meetings
- Class Creation meetings